UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Developing Yourself and Others: A Guide to Building High-Performance Organizations in the National Park Service

for

The National Park Service
US Department of Interior

by

Organizational Assessment Branch
HR Solutions Division
US Office of Personnel Management

A New Day for the Civil Service

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This resource guide was developed to give National Park Service managers a resource to help them find solutions to a wide range of problems relating to organizational performance that many managers face at work. Every aspect of this guide was designed to be *immediately* and *directly useful.* You will find concrete examples of effective ideas and behaviors specific to the needs of the National Park Service. You can read the guide all the way through, or refer to individual sections as needed. The contents reflect both well-known "best practices" and new insights discovered by recent research.

Crucially, this guide is built around verbs, not nouns.

Many books and guides talk about "supervision" or "resource management." This one talks about "supervising" and "managing resources." The difference is subtle, but critical. A list of nouns is a list of things that need to get done—by someone, at some point. A list of verbs is a call to action. Verbs are activities that you, the manager, need to do every day if you, your park or office, and the National Park Service are to achieve the best possible results.

The most important resources a manager has—the ones that will ultimately determine your success as a manager—are employees, or "human" resources. Success also hinges on how well non-human resources like money, equipment, and time are managed. Therefore, this guide is built around the central concept of effectively managing resources, especially human resources.

> Everything described in this guide—better ways to supervise, develop, and engage employees; better ways to recognize and award performance; better ways to build and manage teams; and better ways to lead organizations—are just different facets of your true job as a manager, which is to make the best use of available resources, including your own time, to achieve your organization's goals.

For that reason, "Managing Resources" is the first section in this guide. Then comes three sections about employee relations: "Supervising Employees," "Engaging Employees," and "Developing Employees." After that comes "Building and Managing Teams," "Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards," then "Leading Organizations." Each section flows from the previous one, but each section can stand on its own. Each section ends with a checklist that summarizes the section's main points and serves as a helpful reminder of what you can do to get the best results from everyone else. At the end of the guide, all of the checklists are combined and reformatted to fit onto one printable page.

PRINTABLE CONDENSED CHECKLISTS

Each section in this guide ends with a fairly detailed checklist of behaviors that will help you achieve seven of your most important tasks as a manager in the National Park Service. To provide a one-page summary of our advice, we present a condensed version of each checklist below.

Managing Resources

✓Make Time for Strategic Thinking
✓Study the Past
✓Study the Present
✓Make a Plan
✓Anticipate

Supervising Employees

✓Develop Trust
✓Speak and Listen
✓Respect and Hold Accountable
✓Monitor Performance

Engaging Employees

✓Speak and Listen
✓Delegate and Develop

Developing Employees

✓Discuss Development
✓Evaluate Performance
✓Look for Opportunities
✓Make a Plan
✓Share Experiences
✓Measure Development

Building and Leading Teams

✓Develop Team Trust
✓Select and Organize Carefully
✓Reinforce Cooperation, not "Groupthink"
✓Design Processes to Manage at a Distance
✓Develop High Performance
✓Keep Stakeholders Informed

Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards

- ✓ Say Thanks
- ✓ Align Recognition with Strategy
- ✓ Publicize Awards
- ✓ Explain Awards
- ✓ Give Everyone Opportunities
- ✓ Learn Employee Preferences
- ✓ Keep Records

Leading Organizations

- ✓ Sell the Vision
- ✓ Listen and Revise
- ✓ Remember Your Constituents
- ✓ Hire and Develop
- ✓ Consider New Approaches
- ✓ Reward Excellence
- ✓ Challenge the Organization

MANAGING RESOURCES

What Managing Resources Really Means

For the National Park Service, effectively managing resources is a two-step process.

1) Consider all the available information before deciding the best way to solve a problem.

2) After you've made and implemented your decision, record the result as accurately as you can. This record becomes part of the available information for solving the next problem.

In other words, managing resources well means analyzing the results of all decisions and actions to continually improve your organization's ability to create and sustain cost-*effective mission success*. It is concerning yourself with analyzing strategic goals, the internal and external environment those goals relate to, all decisions made within those environments, and the actions stemming from those decisions. It is committing yourself and your organization to a data-driven, rigorous attempt to answer the question, "How can we best use our limited resources to pursue our goals?"

How Managing Resources Well Helps You

Managing resources well help ensure that the current and future needs of your organization are met. Given the shrinking pool of resources many federal agencies face today, it is more important than ever to get the greatest feasible return on *any* investment of *any* resource—money, people, technology, time, or anything else.

What Managers Skilled in Managing Resources Do Well

Best Practice #1: Make Time to Think Strategically

From a resource or visitor management perspective, it's usually a mistake for managers to make decisions too quickly. It's also usually wrong to react reflexively to the loudest need of the moment (except in obvious emergency situations), instead of proactively preparing for the most likely future needs.

> First and foremost, make time to think strategically about the mission(s) that your part of the National Park Service needs to achieve. As a manager, maximizing the value you get from your limited resources is your most important job.
>
> Remember, too many managers spend too much of their time "putting out fires." Your employees can put out the current fires. One of your jobs as a manager is to anticipate, and take steps to reduce the damage from, the *next* fire.

Best Practice #2: Keep Looking for Better Answers

Here is a guide for making the best use of the time set aside for strategic thinking:

1) Question your own assumptions and opinions.

2) Resist confirmation bias. That is the tendency, once an opinion is formed, to see only evidence that supports that opinion, and to discount evidence that suggests that opinion is wrong.

3) Resist the temptation to surround yourself with people who always agree with you. Ensure that people on your teams can bring different perspectives to the table.

4) Put yourself in different environments where you will be forced to see different perspectives, which will also challenge your assumptions and help you to see other viewpoints.

5) Seek to anticipate future consequences and trends.

6) Create a strategic plan for your unit. Use data to support your plan. Ask people you trust to review your plan. Form a consortium with a few other individuals to identify and present strategic issues as well as data-driven rationales to address the issues.

7) Analyze business success stories as well as failures and look for patterns. Incorporate what you learn to improve your strategic thinking.

Best Practice #3: Promote Organizational Stewardship

The National Park Service has stewardship over many of America's most valuable cultural and natural resources. Similarly, managers like you have stewardship over the human resources of your immediate organization. Here are steps you can take to both conserve, and work to improve, all of the resources at your disposal.

1) Determine what knowledge, skills, and abilities your park and office cannot succeed without in the future.

2) Develop strategies to conserve resources (e.g., identify efficiencies in use of equipment or other operating costs, promote on-the-job training and cross-training, identify and use staff capabilities, minimize energy requirements of new developments).

3) Develop strategies to leverage resources where possible (e.g., increase volunteer recruitment, apply for grants, seek increased donations). Look for opportunities to partner with the community, nonprofits, or other parts of the NPS to meet organizational goals.

4) Analyze allocations to ensure staff, operations, and funding needs are met.

5) Identify opportunities to decrease costs and improve sustainability (e.g., recycling, reuse of materials/structures, energy consumption, etc.).

6) Invest the time necessary to recruit or hire only those employees who have (or who can quickly learn) the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for your park or office to succeed.

7) Develop your employees so they can reach their fullest potential, either for you, or for another part of the NPS that might need them even more. For instance, encourage employees to train each other so that if a more experienced employee leaves, your park's or office's mission-critical knowledge, skills, and abilities do not suddenly drop below sustainable levels. (See the "Developing Employees" section of this resource guide.)

Best Practice #4: Meet and Anticipate Your Constituents' Needs

Your constituency is the reason your park or office exists. In the case of the National Park Service, it consists of the resources the area was legislated to protect and the future generations of park visitors. For a support office, it is the people who need your office's services, and also the ultimate results those services produce.

The best managers meet the needs of the present while keeping an eye on the unpredictable needs of the future. Here are steps you can follow to best serve your constituency.

1) Define your constituents—the people, organizations, and in some cases the resources that depend on you and the protection you provide.

2) Recognize and respect the potentially conflicting needs of your various constituents.

3) Encourage and listen to feedback from constituents and use their feedback to adjust your strategies for meeting needs.

4) Encourage and listen to feedback from employees, and use their feedback as well.

5) Be a role model for customer service by delivering on your promises.

6) Train employees to serve their entire constituency well, and reward them for doing so.

Checklist for Managing Resources

- ✓ **Make Time:** Set aside time each week just for strategic thinking. When possible, incorporate strategic thinking into other work activities as well.
- ✓ **Study the Past:** Record and study past results of attempts to solve problems. Keep looking for better solutions to today's (and tomorrow's) problems.
- ✓ **Study the Present:** Gather as much data as you can find, from as many reliable sources as you can find, to measure and test the effectiveness of the way you currently use your limited resources.
- ✓ **Make a Plan:** Design a strategic plan to make the best use of available resources, and regularly seek to improve it.
- ✓ **Anticipate:** Watch for trends and news that might help you anticipate future challenges.

SUPERVISING EMPLOYEES

What Supervising Employees Really Means

In the National Park Service, supervising means making sure employees achieve the results necessary to successfully achieve our daily tasks, but also keeping an eye to our future and building an organization that excels in achieving its mission.

The supervisory position is often referred to as a *position of trust*.

How Supervising Employees Well Helps You

Better supervision dramatically improves productivity and effectiveness, as well as employees' perceptions of their jobs and their organization. Results from other federal and private-sector organizations show that employees who are not happy with their organization or their job are less productive, less engaged, more likely to abuse sick leave and annual leave, and give less of the discretionary effort organizations need to succeed in their missions[1].

Additionally, through surveys, NPS employees have said:

1) Employees who think their performance appraisal is a fair reflection of their performance are *nine times* more likely to be satisfied with their job than employees who do not, and *ten times* more likely to be satisfied with their organization.

2) Employees who believe their leaders "maintain high standards of honesty and integrity" are nearly *seven times* more likely to say they'd recommend the NPS as a good place to work than employees who do not, and nearly *eleven times* more likely to be satisfied with their organization.

3) Employees who say they have "trust and confidence in" their supervisors are *eight times* more likely to say they'd recommend the NPS as a good place to work than employees who do not, and nearly *nine times* more likely to be satisfied with their job.

4) Employees who think their supervisors are doing a good job are *twelve times* more likely to say they'd recommend the NPS as a good place to work than employees who do not, and *fifteen times* more likely to be satisfied with their organization.

[1] Marrelli, A. F. (2011). Employee engagement and performance management in the federal sector. *Performance Improvement, 50,* 5-13.

What Managers Skilled in Supervising Employees Do Well

Best Practice #1: Establish and Maintain an Environment of Trust

Everything this guide discusses fails if employees don't trust their managers and supervisors, and if managers and supervisors don't trust their employees. Trust comes from continually doing two things:

1) Telling people what you're doing and why you're doing it.[2]

2) Doing what you said you would do, for the reasons you said you would do it.

Managers and supervisors need to hold both themselves and their staff to this behavioral standard. Every time people match their deeds to their words, trust grows. Every time people do *not* match deeds to words, trust shrinks.

> Trust shrinks faster than it grows. Therefore, just occasionally failing to match words and deeds can significantly reduce how much employees trust their managers and each other.

Best Practice #2: Engage in Continuous Two-Way Communication with Employees and Constituents

Communication is a never-ending process, not a one-time action or a completed result. There are at least three good reasons to make communication a two-way process at the NPS:

1) To make sure all employees fully understand the context of their work—the overall mission of the National Park Service, and the mission of, vision for, and values of their specific park or office. (Employees can use their park's or office's mission, vision, and values as a guide to making decisions whenever the best action to take is not obvious.)

2) To make sure all employees have all the information and skills they need to perform well in their positions.

3) To actively seek out (and listen to) feedback from employees, internal customers, park visitors, and other NPS constituents and stakeholders on all issues of importance to the park's (or office's) success—especially any information that would be difficult to learn otherwise.

Employees, visitors, internal customers, and other constituents and stakeholders are a manager's best resource for learning about how things are going in their parks. That's why trust is so vital. If employees and constituents don't believe you'll listen to them, or they think you won't believe what they tell you, they'll stop telling you what you need to know.

Best Practice #3: Establish and Maintain Professional Relationships with All Employees

The difference between a professional relationship and a friendly or familial one is rooted in *accountability*. It isn't enough to assume everyone will do what is required for operational success; employees and the results they produce must be *managed.*

[2] Covey, S. M. R., & Merrill, R. R. (2006). *The speed of trust: The one thing that changes everything.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Managers who fail in their professional relationships tend to make one of two mistakes. The first is to be too severe. Such managers act as if they do not trust their staff to perform even the most basic tasks correctly. They micromanage, they establish inflexible rules even when being more flexible would produce better results, and they seem to care more about following procedures than getting the results the NPS needs to succeed.

The second mistake is to ignore accountability. A manager's job is to produce results through other people. Managers who ignore accountability allow poor performance to go unrecognized and demoralize their best employees by never distinguishing between good work and unacceptable work. The employees of such managers are more likely to abuse rules for personal gain, to the detriment of specific parks and offices, the National Park Service, and ultimately, the effectiveness of government.

Establishing and maintaining professional relationships is the key to successful parks and offices. A professional relationship is established between you and your staff when your staff:

1) Clearly understand what is expected of them and why.

2) Believe their performance will be evaluated and act accordingly.

3) Are treated with respect by you and by each other.

A professional relationship is established between you and the people you report to in the same way. If you do not have the kind of relationship you need with the people you report to, then you need to ask for it. Ask your own supervisors to clearly communicate what is expected from you, to evaluate your own performance, and to treat you with the same professional level of respect that you give them.

Best Practice #4: Establishing and Maintaining an Environment of High Performance

It is always worth remembering that National Park Service employees are proud of their mission and want to achieve it. Without accurate feedback on their performance, they can't. It may be hard to believe, but most employees want their performance to be evaluated. They want to know what they're already doing well and how they can do better in areas where they struggle.

In order to get the best results from employees, performance must be defined, understood, committed to, encouraged, evaluated, addressed with positive or negative consequences, and recorded.

Defined and Understood. Employees need to know:

1) Exactly what they're trying to accomplish.

2) Why what they're doing matters.

3) What "satisfactory performance" looks like. In other words, how to know if they're doing a task well or badly while they're doing it, so they can make corrections as they work. Understanding this will also help them understand what exceptional or superior performance would be.

Do not assume employees understand the assignment the same way you do. Get employees to tell you in their own words what they think the ultimate result of their task is supposed to be. Get the employee to focus on the desired outcome. When you and the employees see the task in the same way, and have the same definition of "good performance," the likelihood of misunderstandings diminish.

Committed to. Once managers are convinced employees understand what is expected from them, it is important for managers to get some kind of verbal (in some cases, written) commitment to at least satisfactory performance. The "commit to" step is not necessary for all employees, especially those with a history of satisfactory or better performance. But when dealing with employees whose history is less ideal, a verbal or written commitment to performance can be a powerful motivator for producing that performance.

Encouraged. Once the task has been defined and understood, managers need to:

1) Let the employees do their jobs.

2) Be available if the employee needs advice or guidance once the task has begun.

3) Hold back unless the employee is clearly failing or asks for assistance.

One of the worst mistakes managers can make is to tell employees what needs to be done, define what good performance looks like, then step in and do all the work themselves. That behavior says, "I can't trust you employees to do this job right." In many cases, what such managers really mean is, "Forget what I said I wanted—what I *really* want is someone to do the job exactly as I would."

That behavior is called "micromanaging" and decades of both research and business results have shown that few behaviors are more damaging to a workforce's effectiveness. The highest performing organizations encourage employees to find a *better* way to do a job than the best way the manager knows.

> It is not a manager's job to get employees to perform scripted routines. It is a manager's job to ethically elicit outstanding results.

For more on this topic, see the "Employee Engagement" section of this guide.

Evaluated. The best managers evaluate *the performance, not the performers*. Focusing on the difference between the result employees produced and the result you wanted is the key to effectively critiquing performance. First, recognize what the employee actually did. Then, if the performance was inadequate, remind the employee of the purpose of their task. Then, suggest a better way to accomplish that task. An example follows.

> Suppose you wanted an employee to organize some computer files by subject matter. Instead, they organized the files by author. You could say something like this:
>
> "I see you organized the files by author. Thank you, because it was impossible to find anything before. However, my real concern is that we can find files on a specific subject more easily. I don't want you to lose what you've done, but can you now put together sets of files that all relate to the same subject?"
>
> By asking a question, you give the employee the chance to say something like this:
>
> "I tried that, and there are so many subjects in these files I don't know where to start. And most of the files relate to more than one subject."
>
> Now the real problem comes into focus: the task isn't as clear as it seemed. One good response to the employee is to acknowledge this problem, and use the teaching opportunity it presents by saying something like:
>
> "I can see how that's a problem. Next time you run into a situation like this, come to me sooner so we can resolve it sooner. For now, try this method…"
>
> Now the manager and the employee are working together for better performance.

Addressed. Ideally, managers would evaluate *every* result employees produce, then address it. In other words, managers would praise good work and use less than good work as a teaching opportunity. Addressing performance is so important that how to do it well is covered by two other sections of this guide—"Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards" and "Developing Employees"—rather than being summarized here. However, a special point about dealing with consistently poor performance needs to be made here.

Dealing with Poor Performance. Remember that holding people accountable does not make managers the "bad guys." If anything, it has the opposite effect because it sustains trust and reminds everyone why they're working at all: to produce desired results. If the procedure described in this section is followed, then employees will tell you they understand what is expected of them before they begin the work and have (explicitly or implicitly) committed to good performance. Therefore, it should be a rare occurrence when employees think they have done an excellent job and their manager disagrees.

If expectations are clearly communicated, understood, and committed to, employees will already know when they have failed to meet expectations. If they continue not to meet expectations for a

long period of time, they will know that, too. So when the time comes for corrective measures—for example, withholding a within-grade increase—managers can say something like, "You committed to numerous goals this year and acknowledged that your performance plan requires these commitments to be met in order to receive a step increase. I'm not withholding the step increase to be evil, but to be *fair* by doing exactly what the plan we developed calls for. If I broke the rules for you, *that* would be unfair."

Recorded. A written record of employee accomplishments (and difficulties) acts as an argument for recognizing and awarding performance when the work quality is high, and when work quality is low, for whatever corrective actions will help the organization reach its goals. If persistently low quality work is such a problem that legal actions, such as termination, need to be considered, a recorded history of poor performance will provide necessary support for such steps to be taken.

Far too often, federal managers consider keeping written records as an extraordinary activity, to be used only in cases of exceptionally high or low work quality. When the opposite approach is taken, and written records become routine, then performance management becomes part of a manager's day-to-day work. When employees are not just allowed, but encouraged, to review their own records, the records become a strong motivational tool, especially for younger workers.[3]

Checklist for Supervising Employees Well

- ✓ **Develop Trust:** Establish and maintain trust.
  - → Tell people what you're doing and why you're doing it.
  - → Do what you said you would do.
- ✓ **Speak and Listen:** Engage in two-way communication.
  - → When making a decision that affects other people, get input from those people before making your final decision.
  - → Solicit input from your employees, NPS visitors, and other constituents. They have information you need.
- ✓ **Respect and Hold Accountable:** Treat every NPS employee with professional respect. Part of professional respect is holding people accountable for doing what they told you they would do.
- ✓ **Monitor Performance:** For every task you need someone to perform, make sure that "good performance" on that task is:

[3] Trahant, B. (2007). Debunking Five Myths Concerning Employee Engagement. *Public Manager*, *36*, 53-59.

- → Defined and understood (are you sure they understand what you need?),
- → Committed to (in writing, if necessary),
- → Encouraged (be available if needed, but only if needed),
- → Evaluated (employees want to know how they're performing),
- → Addressed (recognized if quality is high, corrected otherwise), and
- → Recorded (to document a history of excellent or insufficient performance).

ENGAGING EMPLOYEES

What Engaging Employees Really Means

For our purposes, "engaging employees" is the act of raising employees' commitment to performance so they produce outstanding results in their job.

How Engaging Employees Well Helps You

Compared to average employees, highly engaged employees[4]

1) Produce higher quality work (at least 16% higher quality in one study[5])
2) Use less sick leave.
3) Are less likely to complain about unfair treatment.
4) Are less likely to quit.
5) Produce higher levels of customer satisfaction.

What Managers Skilled in Engaging Employees Do Well

No one in an organization has more influence over an employee's level of engagement than that employee's immediate supervisor. Therefore, all the material in the "Supervision" section of this guide relates directly to employee engagement and should be followed in order to produce a highly engaged workforce. This section refines the concept of engagement and offers advice specific to raising engagement levels.

Best Practice #1: Ask Employees for Input about Decisions That Affect Them

Ultimately, the success of the National Park Service depends on the cooperation of all its employees. Giving employees a chance to speak honestly, without fear of reprisal, about a situation that affects their job or their mission is a form of cooperation. Additionally, employees may have critical information that might influence a manager's decision. Therefore, involving employees in decisions that affect them improves the manager's ability to make the best possible decision and to achieve the best possible outcome. Furthermore, giving employees a chance to speak openly lets them know that their input is valuable, and they are an important part of the Park Service. (Which they are.)

Best Practice #2: Acknowledge Differences Among Employees' Interests Without Seeming to Play Favorites

Not all employees are equally interested in giving their opinion, or equally good at providing useful information. Such employees can still be very good at their jobs, but might have little interest in the "big picture," or perhaps they know they lack the background necessary to give useful advice on a

[4] Marrelli, A. F. (2011). Employee engagement and performance management in the federal sector. *Performance Improvement*, *50*, 5-13.

[5] Spreitzer, G., & Porath, C. (2012). Creating sustainable performance. *Harvard Business Review*, *90*, 92-99.

specific matter. If an employee routinely forfeits chances to give input, it would be easy to forget that, on specific occasions, such employees might have useful ideas. It is important to go to these quieter employees once in a while and make a special effort to get whatever input they have, if for no other reason than to keep such employees from feeling ignored.

Other employees may want to weigh in on every aspect of how the National Park Service operates. If those employees continually provide useful advice, it would be easy—and not advisable—for a manager to always rely on such employees when making decisions.

Employees notice who influences a manager's decisions, and some employees will interpret such influence as favoritism. To counter that perception, managers need to openly and clearly state that *all* employees are welcome to give their opinion on matters that affect their job and their ability to perform it well, then evaluate each opinion on its own merits, and not the merits of the person who gave it. Furthermore, managers need to state when specific ideas (*not* specific people) influenced their final decision. Praising good ideas encourages more and better ideas. Praising people who are good at coming up with ideas can come across as favoritism if it isn't done within careful guidelines (see the "Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards" section of this document).

Best Practice #3: Delegating Special (or "Growth") Responsibilities Without Seeming to Play Favorites

Another way to raise employees' engagement levels is to delegate special responsibilities to interested (and qualified) employees. The threat of perceived favoritism is even greater with delegated responsibilities than with listening to employee opinions, so the best managers take even greater precautions with delegation. Unlike when soliciting feedback about an upcoming decision, managers can't interpret silence as a lack of interest. So, the best managers

1) Carefully document what knowledge, skills, and abilities would be most likely to produce successful results in this opportunity.

2) Treat delegation opportunities like a job opening. They publicly announce the opportunity, establish minimum qualifications, and ask employees to indicate interest.

3) Meet one-on-one with every employee who could reasonably be considered for the special assignment and get each employee to indicate a level of interest.

4) Delegate the assignment based on employee qualifications and interest, especially interest. Privately inform whoever gets the delegation first, then the other people who showed interest.

5) Document the process and the results of the process, and if feasible, have relevant staff either sign the documentation or add to it in some other meaningful way.

6) Finally, publicly announce to all relevant staff who got the assignment and why, and extend some kind of consideration to anyone not selected.

As an example, a manager could hold a special staff meeting to say:

"Last week, I announced the availability of a special assignment. I asked each of you in private whether you were interested: 17 of you were not, and four of you were. Of those four, Pat and Shannon were the most interested, and bring the most needed skills to the task.

"Pat, I'm giving you this assignment because you have a little more experience with this kind of work. However, I'd like you to have Shannon assist when possible. For the rest of you, keep me informed about your interests and I'll try to create more opportunities. I would like everyone who wants this kind of assignment to get one sooner or later."

It's difficult to completely eradicate the perception of favoritism when some employees get different treatment than others. However, employees are more likely to accept decisions when managers are open, honest, and fair about the process, involve others in the decision process, and document their processes and results.

Checklist for Engaging Employees Well

- ✓ **Speak and Listen:** Ask for, and consider, employees' opinions about upcoming decisions that affect their ability to perform their jobs.
  - → Some employees seem to always have an opinion. Don't let these employees have undue influence over you.
  - → Some employees seem to never have an opinion. Make sure they know their opinions will be taken seriously, if they ever want to express one, and give them opportunities to express their opinions in private.
  - → When making the final decision, discuss employee opinion without mentioning which employees gave which opinions. Make it clear that *ideas* influenced you, not people.
- ✓ **Delegate and Develop:** Fairly and openly delegate special responsibilities to interested, qualified employees.
  - → Document what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are truly required to do well in the opportunity.
  - → Make sure all relevant employees have a chance to express their interest and demonstrate their qualifications for the opportunity.
  - → Treat KSAs as a minimum qualification for the position, then assign based on employee interest and experience.
  - → Extend some kind of consideration to any qualified employee not selected.
  - → Document the process to demonstrate it was done fairly from beginning to end.

DEVELOPING EMPLOYEES

What Developing Employees Really Means

In the National Park Service, developing employees means helping employees improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and prepare for greater responsibilities.

Most people want to grow and develop. Many people also want to move into higher level positions with greater responsibilities and higher salaries. In order for employees to grow, there must be processes in place and opportunities for them to grow, they must have the support of their supervisor, and they must be willing to do the work required for growth. If employee development is not a priority for the organization, the supervisor, and the employee, then growth is unlikely to happen.

How Developing Employees Better Helps You

One of a manager's roles is to make sure others are doing the work they have been assigned in order to accomplish NPS's mission. Developing employees will help ensure that employees are highly capable, and that people are ready to accept more responsibility for mission success when opportunities become available.

What Managers Skilled in Developing Employees Do Well

Best Practice #1: Make Developing Your Staff One of Your Formal Assignments

If managers don't make the development of their employees a priority, such growth is unlikely to happen. As a supervisor, your job is to help people grow beyond their current position.

To accomplish that goal, managers need to set aside about eight hours per year for each subordinate:[6]

1) Two hours for in-depth appraisals of the employee's current strengths and weaknesses in the competencies most important for success at the next higher level at NPS.

2) Two hours for in-depth conversations with each employee about career aspirations. What is the employee willing to do to attain these goals? How realistic is the employee's self-assessment of developmental needs and strengths?

3) Two hours for creating a three- to five-year development plan with the employee.

4) Two hours for sharing your own findings and recommendations, usually as part of a succession planning process, and arranging for developmental events for each individual.

Best Practice #2: Provide Regular Formal and Informal Feedback

Development is not something that happens once or twice a year during performance appraisal meetings. Developmental feedback is an investment in your employees' careers and an important tool for shaping behavior and fostering learning. Without regular formal and informal feedback, employees

[6] Lombardo, M., & Eichinger, R. (2004). *FYI: For your improvement, a guide for development and coaching.* (4th ed.). Lominger Ltd.

may not have an accurate picture of their current strengths and weaknesses. While most people are comfortable providing positive feedback, supervisors are often reluctant to provide feedback on developmental needs. Below are some tips for providing constructive feedback.

1) **Focus on Improvement.** Remember the purpose of feedback is to enhance performance to improve results. Since improvement is nearly always possible, even employees who produce outstanding results can benefit from feedback that would make those results even better. Feedback gives less successful employees the opportunity to adjust their behavior in order to get the desired results, and it gives more successful employees the opportunity to get even better results.

2) **Remember the Mission.** Relate the feedback to the mission and organizational outcomes. If feedback focuses on outcomes that are important for the NPS, then it becomes more about problem solving and less about telling people they are doing something wrong.

3) **Provide balanced feedback.** People will be more receptive to constructive feedback if you start with what they are doing well.

4) **Focus on Behavior.** Focus on the behavior, not the person. For instance, telling employees they are "being rude" will probably cause problems, not solve them. Asking employees to greet guests in a specific manner tells them what they need to do to improve their customer service.

5) **Provide timely feedback.** Feedback is more meaningful and useful if it comes immediately after the relevant actions. Constructive feedback in particular should be given as quickly as possible to allow individuals the opportunity to improve.

6) **Be specific.** Employees are much more likely to change if constructive feedback is specific, because they will have a much better idea of what they need to change. For example, if an employee consistently shows up 20 minutes late for work, it is better to tell them that you need them to get to work at a specific time, rather than to tell them to "stop being late."

7) **Prioritize Feedback.** Don't overwhelm employees with feedback. Research into goal setting tells us that people are more likely to reach their goals if they set difficult but attainable goals, and if they focus on only a few goals. Employees who have a large number of developmental needs should be provided with feedback on the one or two most critical areas.

8) **Use Many Sources.** Arrange for employees to get feedback from a variety of sources. As an example, employees who receive formal peer feedback (*e.g.*, a 360° feedback assessment) every few years will also have benchmarks against which to gauge their improvement.

9) **Use Mentors.** As part of on-the-job training, consider pairing struggling or less experienced employees with employees who are more skilled and willing to be a mentor.

Best Practice #3: Delegate

Delegating is an important developmental tool, but one that is often not used effectively. Managers are often not trained in how to delegate appropriately, or they may feel guilty assigning additional

work to employees who may already have a heavy workload. Managers may also be reluctant to delegate work when it will take them more time to delegate and supervise the work than it will to do it themselves, or when they don't trust employees to perform the task well. To ensure that you are delegating effectively (rather than just assigning tasks to your employees), delegated tasks should meet the following criteria:

1) The task is no longer developmental for you, the manager.

2) The task needs to be completed.

3) The employee either has no experience performing the task, or does not perform the task well.

4) The employee would benefit from learning how to perform the task better.

When delegating, emphasize the developmental nature of the delegated task so employees understand their role is not just to do the task, but to learn from it and ask questions along the way.

Best Practice #4: Measure the Effect of Development on Mission Success

Research has shown that the act of measuring the effect of training and developmental activity on work productivity directly increases those effects. Therefore, we recommend taking steps to see how an employee's training has helped that employee's productivity.

Below are four kinds of questions managers can try to answer to see what effect learning has had on the workplace. These levels correspond those identified in the well-known and frequently used "Kirkpatrick" model of measuring learning's effects.[7]

Reaction questions. Did you enjoy the training (or developmental experience)? Do you think it was useful? Do you think you'll be able to apply what you learned to your job?

Learning questions. Using a before-and-after approach, how does this employee rate on the relevant skills after the learning experience, compared to before it? Is the employee better at some specific aspect of the job after having this learning experience? Do the employee's peers see a difference? Do the employee's supervisors see one?

Behavior questions. What, specifically, is the employee doing differently after the learning experience than before it? What has changed in how the employee approaches or handles a situation?

Results questions. Has the change in the employee's behavior led to noticeable improvements in my park's or office's ability to perform part of its mission? Specific examples for a variety of situations include: Has customer satisfaction improved? Are audiences saying the employee's presentations are easier to understand? Are there fewer complaints about the employee's behavior from park visitors?

[7] For an overview of the model and many good ideas on how to evaluate the effect of any training activity, see Kirkpatrick, D. (1998). *Another look at evaluating training programs*. Alexandria, VA: American Socitey for Training and Development.

Is the employee accomplishing tasks without assistance, when previously, the employee required significant assistance?

Checklist for Developing Employees Well

- ✓ **Discuss Development:** Spend eight hours per direct report, per year, discussing that employee's development.
- ✓ **Evaluate Performance:** Evaluate and address each employee's performance regularly, accurately, and transparently, using methods discussed in the "Supervising Employees" and "Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards" sections.
- ✓ **Look for Opportunities:** Be aware of positions available to employees at their next higher level(s) and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for success at those higher levels.
- ✓ **Make a Plan:** Construct developmental plans for each employee, including stretch assignments and delegated duties.
- ✓ **Share Experiences:** Expose employees to parts of NPS they are not familiar with (for instance, let them sit in on higher-level meetings, or let them be part of intra-agency task forces).
- ✓ **Measure Development:** Measure the effect of the developmental activity on the employee's productivity and the overall organization's success.

BUILDING AND MANAGING TEAMS

What Building and Managing Teams Really Means

From a manager's perspective, teamwork often means building and managing teams within one's own part of NPS. Specifically, managers decide what group of employees should be assigned to a project, then give that group the support it needs to produce the desired outcome.

How Building and Managing Teams Well Helps You

Good results at NPS are often the result of two or more people working together. Since most work requires multiple employees to interact, the better teamwork NPS has, the better results it will get.

Additionally, through surveys, NPS employees have said:

1) Employees who agree that people at work cooperate to get the job done are *eleven times* more likely to recommend NPS as a place to work than employees who do not, and *fourteen times* more likely to be satisfied with their organization.

2) Employees who agree that people at work share job knowledge are *ten times* more likely to recommend NPS as a place to work than employees who do not, and *ten times* more likely to be satisfied with their job.

What Managers Skilled in Building and Managing Teams Do Well

Best Practice #1: Establish and Sustain Team Trust

Being part of a team involves at least temporarily, and at least to some degree, putting aside one's individual needs in order to advance the cause of the team. But unless everyone on the team trusts that individual needs will not be completely ignored (or worse, betrayed), the team will disintegrate into a set of non-interacting individuals.

Therefore, what was said in the "Supervising Employees" section about trust is even more important for people leading a team. Trust comes from repeatedly, persistently telling people what you're going to do, then doing it just like you said you would. However, teams can face additional trust-related problems which require special measures to treat.

Barriers of Authority. When people with different levels of formal authority work on the same team, people with less authority are sometimes reluctant to say what they really believe. For a team to excel, its members must be willing to say anything that is genuinely intended to improve the final result. The formal barriers between people that exist in other environments may need to be reduced on a team if that team is to be effective. That means people with less formal authority need to be more willing to show initiative, and people with more formal authority need to let them. This limited reduction of formal distance between teammates can significantly improve trust both in the team environment, and outside of it.

Group Performance. Teams depend so greatly on cooperation that what works well outside of a team environment—for instance, measuring all results at the level of the individual—might prevent a team from getting the best possible results. Teams need to eliminate practices that foster individual competition among teammates and replace them with practices that reinforce collaboration. Teams have to navigate between two unwise extremes: letting one person do all the work while everyone takes credit for it, and forcing everyone on the team to do precisely equal amounts of work even when that strategy produces an inferior result.

One solution to measuring group performance is to ensure that all members of a team understand their role on the team, and their expected contribution to the team. Their production doesn't have to be equal to everyone else's, but it has to be at least equal to what was expected from them. Therefore, when measuring group performance, it is useful to split performance measurement into two parts by answering two questions:

1) To what extent were the ultimate goals achieved?

2) To what extent did each team member fulfill his or her obligations to the team?

Consider a team of two members, Chris and Dale. Chris agreed to complete one small task and produced an outstanding result. Dale agreed to complete five large tasks and completed only three of them, and some of them not very well. Even though Dale produced a greater share of the team's output than Chris, Chris performed better than Dale. Since we can assume the team goals were not fully met, the group as a whole performed less well than expected.

Groupthink. Teams need to fully cooperate while still preventing a phenomenon called "groupthink." Groupthink occurs when cooperation crosses the line into enforced conformity.

Successful teams cooperate though compromise. That is, successful teams produce a result that all team members can agree on, even though some members might not consider the result to be their personal ideal. So to that extent, cooperation and being willing to settle for something different than one's personal favorite solution is necessary. But when compromise becomes coerced uniformity, teams fail. Under such conditions, team members withhold opinions or other information that could improve results because they're afraid of harming group cohesion, or afraid of some kind of retaliation from the group for expressing disagreement.

Successful teamwork comes from maintaining the balance between satisfying each and every individual on the team, and satisfying the group as a whole. The key to getting individuals to think as a group (temporarily, and just for a specific purpose) is for team members to trust that once the group purpose has been served, individual needs will again be considered.

Best Practice #2: Match the Team's Membership to the Team's Purpose

For our purposes, a team is a set of at least two people selected to accomplish a specific purpose. The word "selected" matters. In a workplace, members of teams are selected (even if self-selected through volunteering) on the basis of the knowledge, skills, and abilities the team will need to succeed in its purpose.[8]

When designing a team to accomplish a task, the best managers think in terms of what skills the whole team will need. If you were putting nine people together to form a good baseball team, most of the players would need to hit well, but only one or two would need to pitch well. Therefore, recruiting nine great pitchers who can't hit would be a terrible strategy.

Best Practice #3: Match the Team's Structure to the Team's Purpose and Environment

The right way to structure a team is whatever way is most likely to get the desired result. In most professional settings, team managers coordinate the activities of workers who can operate independently. However, nearly every team in nearly every environment needs at least one person whose main duty is to observe how well the other team members are coordinating their actions and suggest corrections meant to guide the team where it needs to go.

In many areas of the National Park Service, park and office managers play the "observer and coordinator" role, and park or office staff form the rest of their team. Large parks or offices with large staffs might need more than one person to take the observer role, but generally, there is one person ultimately responsible for watching over the entire park's or office's effectiveness.

Best Practice #4: Design Processes for Performing Well Across Distance

It is rarely safe to assume that all members of a team will always be in the same place at the same time. Furthermore, the advent of the mobile workforce makes the concept of *virtual teams* more important than ever. NPS managers frequently need to monitor the results of people who are not right in front of them.

In the 21st century, the concept of "psychological distance" among teammates is proving to be more important than physical distance.[9] The greater psychological distance there is between two people, the less inclined they are to cooperate. To reduce psychological distance among team members:

1) Make sure everyone fully understands the team's goal and their individual assignments.

    a) Go to even greater lengths than usual to ensure all members clearly understand what is being asked of them, why, and how their part of the job will affect other team members and all stakeholders.

[8] There is a strong parallel between forming a team and hiring employees to staff parks and offices.
[9] Clemons, D., & Kroth, M. (2011). *Managing the mobile workforce: Leading, building, and sustaining virtual teams.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

b) Go to even greater lengths than usual to ensure communication has been effective by verifying, one team member at a time if necessary, that everyone has the same understanding of what the communication was about and what its implications are.

2) Link the team's goals to your park's or office's mission, vision, and values.

3) Keep an eye on the degree of connection that various team members portray (frequency of interaction, level of volunteerism, audible enthusiasm, etc.).

4) Make optimal use of available technology (video conference, mobile phones, email, web sites, internal wikis, etc.) to make sure members feel like a group and can interact with each other to the degree required.

Best Practice #5: Establishing and Maintaining an Environment of High Performance

Using a well-defined performance management system like the one described in the "Supervision" section is always important, but it is even more important when managing employees across distance. In fact, the less able a manager is to intervene directly during an employee's performance, the more critical it is to establish the high-performance environment previously discussed.

Remember, performance must be

1) Defined and understood.

2) Encouraged.

3) Evaluated.

4) Addressed.

5) Recorded.

For more on this subject, see the "Supervising Employees" section of this guide.

Best Practice #6: Continuously Communicate With Stakeholders

Research shows that the more isolated a team is from the people who need the team's results, the *worse the team's results are.* The old idea of locking a team in a room until they come up with a result turns out to be just about the worst way to manage a team.[10]

Instead, teams need to communicate with everyone who will be affected by their work. One or more members of the team should be specifically assigned the task of keeping in touch with one or more stakeholders and continually updating the team on the stakeholders' most recent input. As the stakeholders' needs and perceptions change, the team may need to change direction accordingly.

[10] Ancona, D. & Bresman, H. (2007). *X-teams: How to build teams that lead, innovate, and succeed*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Checklist for Building and Managing Teams Well

- ✓ **Develop Team Trust:** Establish and sustain an environment of trust among the team.
- ✓ **Select and Organize Carefully:** Select team members who best fit the team's purpose and organize them in whatever way best fits the team's purpose.
- ✓ **Reinforce Cooperation, not "Groupthink":** Processes that work well when managing individuals, like a strong focus on individual performance and results, will harm cooperative teamwork. Teams need techniques that reinforce and reward cooperation, yet allow enough individuality to prevent "groupthink."
- ✓ **Design Processes to Manage at a Distance:** Design processes for performing well across distances, especially with regard to all-way communication and performance management.
- ✓ **Develop High Performance:** Establish and maintain an environment of high performance.
- ✓ **Keep Stakeholders Informed:** Ensure the team regularly communicates with all external stakeholders to remain up-to-date on any changes in the team's purpose or the parameters it must work within.

RECOGNIZING PERFORMANCE AND GIVING AWARDS

What Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards Really Means

For our purposes, the phrase "recognizing performance and giving awards" means any form of recognition— financial or non-financial, rewarding or corrective—given to employees because they performed at a certain level.

How Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards Well Helps You

1) Clearly aligning how you recognize and award for performance with the results you want helps employees understand what results are most highly valued.

2) Giving employees a chance to influence the recognition and awards process increases the likelihood that the process will offer employees something of value, and therefore that the process will work as intended.

3) Clearly communicating what results produce formal awards helps reduce perceptions of favoritism.

4) Keeping written records of employee achievements that employees can access makes every aspect of performance management programs and recognition programs more transparent, more easily understood, more objective, and more likely to achieve the desired results.

What Managers Skilled in Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards Do Well

Best Practice #1: Align Recognition and Awards Plans with Strategic and Operational Plans

If you reward a specific behavior, you're likely to get more of it. Therefore when designing a performance recognition and awards plan, the best managers carefully align such rewards with behavior that is most likely to produce results they want. The most valuable recognition and awards are reserved to support the most valuable behaviors.

How to align rewards with desired behavior:

1) **Make Connections.** Link organizational goals to the goals for individual employees. If your office or park needs to achieve a certain goal, that implies individual employees will have to perform certain tasks.

2) **Be SMART.** Set performance goals for employees that are connected to specific tasks. These goals need to be "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound)[11].

3) **Plan Ahead.** Decide in advance what behaviors and outcomes will be recognized, and how.

[11] Meyer, P. J. (2003). *Attitude is everything!: If you want to succeed above and beyond!* Waco, TX: The Leading Edge Publishing Company.

4) **Be Flexible.** Seek feedback from employees about the perceived value of planned recognition and awards, and make plans flexible enough to accommodate individual preferences. (Some people prefer the equivalent amount of time off over money; some people prefer to be recognized privately while others enjoy public attention; etc.)

Best Practice #2: Give Three Kinds of Performance Recognition and Awards

Recognition and awards come in three different varieties. They are used with different degrees of frequency and for different purposes, and the most effective managers use them all.

Everyday recognition. This kind of recognition is fast, simple, and extremely informal. It can be as simple as telling an employee, "I read those meeting notes you put together. I think you did a good job summarizing everything we talked about. Now we've got all the ideas from that meeting in one place we can all refer to." It can be given in private or in front of other employees, but given its informal and low-key nature, it should be given as soon as it makes the most sense to give it. Do not overthink everyday recognition—if it required substantial thinking, it would probably be the next level of recognition, informal recognition.

Informal recognition. This kind of recognition operates on a larger scale and is often used after a fairly complex project or related set of tasks has been completed, especially if the project or tasks required many days to complete. It is meant to provide a sense that something significant has been accomplished that is directly related to the success of the organization. It is informal because there are no plaques or trophies or financial awards, and because there is less sense that the organization itself is recognizing the performance. Informal recognition is supposed to be more about fun and bonding as employees and can be used to acknowledge an organization's transition from one state (in which a problem existed) to another (in which the problem was solved). A pizza party after a major project concludes would be an example of informal recognition.

Formal recognition. This kind of recognition usually involves some financial expenditure on the part of the organization and some involvement from its senior leaders. It can range from certificates of achievement and wall plaques all the way up to cash awards. Formal recognition is generally given in a public setting by senior leaders of an organization who are spending a meaningful amount of money to reward individuals or teams who have accomplished something difficult, specific, and clearly linked to organizational goals.

Of the three kinds, everyday recognition is the easiest and least expensive. Just about every day, a supervisor or manager should be able to see several opportunities to give this kind of recognition to employees who help the organization achieve its objectives.

Best Practice #3: Recognize Performance and Give Awards in a Timely Manner

Research has shown that the aspect of recognizing performance most important to employees is timeliness.[12] The more formal the recognition, the more likely there will be a delay between the behavior and the recognition, but even in such cases, employees should be informed they are eligible

[12] Saunderson, R. (2004). Survey findings of the effectiveness of employee recognition in the public sector. *Public Personnel Management, 33,* 255-275.

for, or are being nominated for, their recognition quite soon after the relevant behavior has happened.

Best Practice #4: Clearly Explain Why Behavior is Being Recognized

One of the biggest traps organizations must avoid when recognizing good behavior is to be perceived as practicing favoritism. "The same people always get the awards" is a complaint heard at organizations where recognition is performed, but not communicated well.

To avoid this problem, always explain why the activity is being recognized, especially when the recognition can be connected to larger organizational goals. Also, be sure to recognize equivalently good behavior from all employees in accordance with the recognition plan (see Best Practice #1).

> Consider the everyday recognition involved in telling an employee, "Thanks for handling that difficult situation with that campground visitor. I think she's a lot happier now, and customer satisfaction means a lot to us." That statement:
>
> 1) Identifies the behavior (handling a difficult situation) that earned the recognition.
> 2) Identifies the good result (a happier park visitor) the behavior produced.
> 3) Identifies the organizational goal (customer satisfaction) the behavior's result relates to.

It is quite likely that some employees will earn and receive more everyday recognition than others. When a recognition plan is designed and used properly, however, it will be clear to all that the employees who receive more recognition are producing more of the results the National Park Service wants to recognize.

Best Practice #5: Keep Accessible Written Records of Employee Achievements and Formal Recognition

As mentioned in the "Supervising Employees" section, written records of employee accomplishment tend to be used sparingly in the Federal Government, and generally only in cases of exceptionally good or exceptionally poor results. Much of the mystery of why some people get more recognition than others—a mystery that many employees solve by claiming favoritism—will disappear if the requirements for formal recognition are clearly explained in advance, and written records of employees' work shows who did what, when, and how well.

The more transparently such records are kept, the better. Furthermore, employees should know, understand, and have some opportunity to influence what is going into a written record before anything is written.

If the desired work results are defined concretely enough, and aligned clearly enough with a park's or office's mission, vision, and values, then the subjectivity of the recognition and awards process is reduced to an absolute minimum, and no one is surprised by which results produced formal

recognition and which did not.

Checklist for Recognizing Performance and Giving Awards Well

- ✓ **Say Thanks:** First and foremost, when employees perform well, tell them they performed well and thank them for doing so. Explain how your park or office benefitted from their good performance so they understand why their high level of performance was so important.

- ✓ **Align Recognition with Strategy:** Align your plans for recognizing and awarding performance with your organization's strategic plans. This alignment will help you support the most desirable activity and results.

- ✓ **Publicize Awards:** Publicize how your park's or office's recognition and award plans work. Ensure *all* employees understand what results produce what awards, and why.

- ✓ **Explain Awards:** When formal recognition or awards are given, use that opportunity to remind everyone what results produced the award, and why.

- ✓ **Give Everyone Opportunities:** Make sure all employees have opportunities to earn recognition and awards.

- ✓ **Learn Employee Preferences:** Learn how each of your employees prefers to be recognized, and consider their preferences when recognizing performance.

- ✓ **Keep Records:** Keep written records of *all* employee performance so you can defend a request to bestow formal recognition where appropriate (and you can address poor performance, should such action become necessary).

LEADING ORGANIZATIONS

What Leading Organizations Really Means

There are perhaps as many definitions of leading and leadership as there are leaders. There are, however, a number of defining characteristics of leading well at the NPS.

The best leaders have a vision for and an ability to shape the future. They relish leading and are willing to take risks and to make tough decisions. They are able to turn their vision into reality and build and engage their people to achieve to meet both current and future challenges.

Leaders develop their people, deal with conflict effectively, and inspire commitment and trust. Leaders are results driven and make decisions even in the face of incomplete and changing information. Leaders identify opportunities and anticipate crises to the extent possible and collect data to help them prepare. Leaders communicate effectively and look for opportunities to build coalitions. Finally, successful leaders make course corrections when they are not getting the results they want.

How Leading Organizations Well Helps You

Leaders set the vision at whatever level they are leading, are willing to make decisions for the good of the organization even when they go against their own interests, and inspire commitment and loyalty from their employees. Poor leadership in any of the above areas is unlikely to produce long-term, cost-effective success.

What Managers Skilled In Leading Organizations Do Well[13]

Best Practice #1: Set Direction

Leaders figure out what to do by asking questions. Specifically, these three:

1) **What Needs to Happen?** The best leaders don't start by asking "What do I want?" but instead ask "What needs to be done?"

2) **How Can I Help?** After identifying what needs to be done, leaders then ask: "What can and should I do to make a difference?" The best leaders will choose something that both needs to be done and that they will able to perform effectively.

3) **How Will That Help NPS?** Successful leaders relate everything back to the larger organization's mission and goals, which define what constitutes performance and results for their organization.

Best Practice #2: Demonstrate Integrity

Leaders live their values and the values of the organization. Good leaders submit themselves to the "mirror test"; they make sure the person they see in the mirror is the kind of person they want to be,

[13] Much of the information in this section comes from Hesselbein, F., & Goldsmith, M. (2007). *The leader of the future 2: Visions, strategies, and practices for the new era.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

respect, and believe in. They have the strength to do what is right, rather than what is popular, and the integrity to resist the temptations of power.

Even more, the most effective leaders publicly define their core values and strive to develop them in the people they work with. Living in a way that truly reflects your own values is good, but making sure that every aspect of your organization sees, understands, reflects, and produces results in accordance with those values takes leadership and integrity to the next level.

Best Practice #3: Engender Commitment

Successful leaders build collaborative relationships by promoting cooperative goals and building trust. They look to solve problems in ways that give everyone at least some of what they want. They are willing and able to share power and control, and they seek to empower and engage their employees. They share information and create opportunities for people to contribute to team efforts.

Best Practice #4: Develop Organizational Capabilities

Leaders develop strength in their employees while refusing to tolerate questionable performance, standards, or values. They look to surround themselves with the best talent possible, and they draw from different cultures, sectors, backgrounds, and disciplines to get it. They resolve conflicts diplomatically and advocate partnering and collaboration. They serve as a catalyst and manager of strategic change, and seek opportunities by challenging the status quo. Successful leaders experiment, take risks, and learn from mistakes as well as successes.

Best Practice #5: Lead Transactionally Only When Transactional Leadership Gets the Best Results

The ideas of "transactional" and "transformational" leaders goes at least back to the mid-1980s.[14] In the simplest terms, transformational leaders look for new and better ways to work, while transactional leaders tend to avoid risk and pay more attention to whether processes are being followed than whether great results are being produced. Transactional leadership is not bad by definition—the more routine a matter is, the more effective existing processes are, and the less authority a leader has, the more likely it is that a transactional style of leadership will produce the best results.

The key flaw in transactional leadership that must be avoided is *unthinking* adherence to existing processes. Transactional leaders tend to believe that the pursuit of better results is not worth the possibility of failure or the difficulties that might come from trying something new. Furthermore, transactional leaders tend to dislike anxiety to the point that they actively prefer to get good results from known methods than potentially great results from unfamiliar methods. The mottos of transactional leaders in the Federal Government might be, "Please don't make us uncomfortable" and "It's good enough for government work."

Transformational leaders focus on getting better results—not just for themselves, but for their employees, the National Park Service, and even for the whole country. Transformational leaders

[14] Bass, B.M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations.* New York: The Free Press.

think before following established procedure. Transformational leaders work hard to answer the question, "Will doing this the way we've always done it produce the best results, or would doing something new work better?" Then they either try a new way or do it the old way, whichever their answer recommends.

Two behaviors common among transactional leaders that NPS managers should watch out for are

1) Contingent Rewards: Rewarding staff just because they did exactly what they were told to do, or for expending just enough effort to get good results. The better approach is to reward staff for getting *better* than expected results, and for expending discretionary effort to try and reach higher levels of performance.

2) Management by Exception: Allowing staff to keep working in ways that they have always worked, as long as certain minimal levels of organizational performance are being met. The better approach is to slowly grow dissatisfied with the usual results, and focus more on the highest attainable level of performance than the lowest satisfactory level.

Both of these cases are examples of behaviors that aim to do *just enough to satisfy* instead of *as well as can be done given existing limitations*. In the language of federal performance plans, the goal of transactional leaders is to achieve an organizational performance rating of "meets expectations," while the goal of transformational leaders is to achieve a rating of "outstanding."

Checklist for Leading Organizations Well

- ✓ **Sell the Vision:** Develop and continuously communicate a clear and results-focused vision for your park or office.
- ✓ **Listen and Revise:** After communicating, invite responses and dissent. Carefully consider the feedback you get before moving forward.
- ✓ **Remember Your Constituents:** Seek feedback from internal and external constituents, and make satisfying them your highest priority.
- ✓ **Hire and Develop:** Select highly capable people, then develop them into even more capable people.
- ✓ **Consider New Approaches:** Watch for times when you follow, or insist that staff follow, existing rules and procedures without at least considering that a better way may be possible. Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of trying something new before deciding how to proceed.
- ✓ **Reward Excellence:** Reward staff for going beyond the expected level of performance, not just for meeting it.
- ✓ **Challenge the Organization:** Challenge your staff to do even better next time, and reward them for any sincere effort to do so.

CONCLUSIONS: DEVELOPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

This guide is meant to serve as a resource for you as you seek ways to develop both yourself and those who report to you. The most important factor in your development, however, is you. If you have not made a commitment to growth, no tool can help you grow. Development takes time and effort, but the rewards are great.

Although the people on your staff must take responsibility for their own growth, as a manager you can encourage and support them. Help your employees see the value in development, and guide them in their development efforts. You can also serve as a valuable resource by providing feedback and encouraging accountability for development.

We hope you will find this guide useful as you seek to develop yourself and others.

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